

REMARKS

As amended, Claims 55, 57-59, 61-62, 64-65, and 67-77 remain pending and active.


Claims 55-77 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Chmelir et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,605,401). For the following reasons, applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claims 56, 60, 63, and 66 have been canceled so the rejection of these claims is moot.

Independent Claim 55 as amended, from which the balance of the rejected claims depend, recites a step of providing a binder-containing cellulose fiber that includes about 1 to 40% by weight based on the weight of the cellulose fibers of a non-polymeric binder having functional groups from the recited Markush group. The applied Chmelir et al. patent does not disclose or suggest binder-containing cellulose fibers that include a non-polymeric binder in an amount ranging from 1 to 40% by weight based on the weight of the cellulose fiber. Chmelir discloses a suspension of fibers in an organic solvent. Suspending fibers requires an excess of organic solvent and does not anticipate or suggest cellulose fibers that contain about 1 to 40% by weight of a non-polymeric binder. Example 1 of Chmelir et al. is illustrative of the degree to which there is an excess of solvent present when cellulose fibers are suspended therein. In Example 1, based on a density for ethanol of approximately 0.8 g/ml, 300 ml of 96% ethanol weighs approximately 240 g. When 3 g of cellulose are suspended in 240 g of ethanol, there is an 80 times (8000%) excess of ethanol based on the weight of the fiber. Thus, Chmelir et al. does not teach or suggest providing a binder containing cellulose fiber that includes about 1 to 40% by weight of a non-polymeric binder.

Based on the above, the subject matter recited in independent Claim 55 as amended is not anticipated or rendered obvious by Chmelir. Accordingly, Claims 57-59, 61-62, 64-65, 67-68, and 71-77 which depend therefrom are also not anticipated or rendered obvious by Chmelir. For

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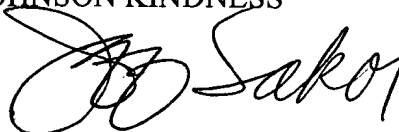


the foregoing reasons, the Examiner should withdraw the outstanding rejection and allow the application.

If the reviewing party has any questions regarding the foregoing, he is invited to call applicants' attorney at the number listed below so that any outstanding issues can be resolved in a timely and efficient manner.

Respectfully submitted,

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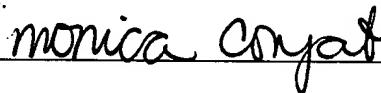


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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE FEBRUARY 20, 2003

In the Claims:

55. (Three Times Amended) A method of binding superabsorbent particles to cellulose fibers comprising [the steps of]:

providing binder-containing cellulose fiber, the binder-containing cellulose fiber comprising cellulose fiber having hydrogen bonding functional sites and from about 1 to 40% by weight based on the weight of the cellulose fiber of a binder comprising a non-polymeric binder having functional groups selected from the group consisting of a carboxyl, a carboxylate, a carbonyl, a sulfonic acid, a sulfonate, a hydroxyl, a phosphoric acid, a phosphate, an amide, an amine, and combinations thereof, the binder comprising binder molecules, the binder molecules having at least one functional group capable of forming a hydrogen bond or a coordinate covalent bond with the superabsorbent particles, and at least one functional group capable of forming a hydrogen bond with the cellulose fiber;

combining superabsorbent particles having a hydrogen or a coordinate covalent bonding functional site with the binder-containing cellulose fiber; and

binding the superabsorbent particles to the binder-containing cellulose fiber.

Claims 56, 60, 63, and 66 have been canceled.